Exploring the Relationship between **Stalking and Homicide**

Monckton Smith, J., Szymanska, K., and Haile, S.
With the Homicide Research Group University of Gloucestershire
Centre for Learning and Innovation in Public Protection.
In association with Suzy Lamplugh Trust

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PROTECTION AGAINST STALKING

Foreword

I am delighted to welcome this report which is the culmination of significant research by the Homicide Research Group at the University of Gloucestershire.

The work of Dr Jane Monckton Smith, Karolina Szymanska and Sue Haile is crucial in showing the link between stalking and homicide. It adds to the argument that stalking, and the associated behaviours, must be taken seriously by both the public and criminal justice professionals, whatever the relationship between victim and perpetrator.

We must work to ensure the motivation and intention of stalking are fully identified as early as possible to try and manage the fixation as quickly as possible.

At Suzy Lamplugh Trust, we have supported too many people who have been scared by the obsession and fixation of another and whose safety has, unfortunately, been compromised by the response from police officers. Every day on the National Stalking Helpline we are told by clients that the pattern of behaviour of their stalking case has not been recognised or the impact of the stalkers actions has not been appreciated. Too often we see the terrible consequences of this.

It is imperative that every allegation of stalking is taken seriously irrespective of relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the age, or even the sometimes bizarre presentation of the stalking. It is important is to understand what motivates the perpetrator and to identify that obsessive behaviour at the earliest moment.

Suzy Lamplugh Trust supports the conclusions of this report and I hope the recommendations will be acted upon by professionals across the Criminal Justice System.

Rachel Griffin

Executive Summary

At least ten people will die every week in the UK as a result of violence related to interpersonal abuse. This is likely to be an underestimation of the true figure and includes child deaths, domestic homicide, and suicides related to partner abuse. There are some consistencies in the antecedent histories of many of these deaths which include a strong association with stalking behaviours.

This research study looked at 358 cases of criminal homicide which occurred in the UK in the years 2012, 2013, and 2014. All cases included a female victim and male perpetrator. However, it is important to note that men and children can also be victims, and women can be perpetrators.

The aim of the study was to explore the relationship between stalking and homicide by tracking the frequency of certain characteristics in the antecedent histories. Our analysis of those frequencies suggests that there is a strong correlation between some key stalking behaviours and homicide. Those key behaviours are characterized by fixation and obsession, actions linked to surveillance and control, and escalation in concerning behaviours.

Further, we suggest that most homicides in our sample appear to occur as part of an emotional journey rather than an explosion of spontaneous and immediately provoked violence.

Therefore, we feel it is more likely to be the frequency, persistence, and escalation, rather than just the severity of actions which could be considered as potential indicators of risk or threat.

Escalation in frequency or severity of concerning behaviours appears to be an important indicator that the emotional journey may be reaching a crisis point. Escalation seems to coincide with the presence of a trigger for serious harm. In many cases in this sample, the key trigger appeared to be separation or its threat, diminishing control, or revenge and resentment. The onset of a period of escalation varied and in some cases occurred very quickly, whilst in others the escalation began after some years. As a result of this we suggest that the length of a relationship or association, where there was one, is not an indicator for the level of potential risk or threat.

This supports the conclusion that early identification and intervention in cases of stalking are crucial.

Key Frequencies recorded:

- Stalking behaviours were present in 94% of the cases: Obsession 94%, fixation 88%.
- Surveillance activity which included covert watching was recorded in 63% of the cases (we estimate this is likely to be much higher in reality).
- Escalation was identified in 79% of the cases.
- Control was recorded in 92% of the cases.
- In 15% of cases the relationship or association was less than 12 months. In 50% of cases (cumulative) less than 10 years, the remaining 50% up to 50 years.
- Isolation of the victim was recorded in 78% of cases.
- Acknowledged high risk action markers were present across the sample. For example: strangulation assault 24%, threats to kill 55%, suicidal threats 23% (again we estimate the presence of these markers could be much higher).
- Diverse activities like court actions were not recognised as stalking.
- Coercive control and stalking were more often simultaneously present where there has been an intimate partner relationship. This type of relationship formed 71% of our sample. (Intact relationships 51%, separated 20%).
- 85% of homicides occurred in the victim's home.
- Threats to kill occurred in 55% of cases, and in some cases the threat was articulated to third parties as well as the victim.

Key Observations

- That stalking is a key indicator for future potential serious harm.
- That stalking should be identified through intention, not just actions.
- That fixated and obsessed stalkers should be identified early.
- That the seriousness of stalking should not be measured solely by the severity of the stalking actions.
- That more actions should be recognised as part of stalking behavior, like vexatious or baseless allegations or court action.
- That victims are helped to restrict access to their home, workplace, cyberspace or other private space.
- That every allegation of stalking is taken seriously irrespective of relationship type or age of offender/victim.
- That consideration is given to the notion that homicide where stalking is present may be reached through a 'journey', and not through immediate proximal provocation by the victim.
- That the public are made aware of the dangers of stalkers.
- That professionals should investigate further when third party allegations are made.
- That professionals should try to pursue all identifiable charges, including stalking or coercive control.

Introduction

Two women will be killed every week by a partner or former partner (Women's Aid 2017), three children will die as a result of abuse (NSPCC 2017), one man will be killed every three weeks in relation to abuse (Flatley 2016), between four and ten women suffering coercive control and domestic abuse will kill themselves every week (Walby 2004).

These figures do not include 'near misses' where people manage to survive, or hidden and unidentified homicides, male and LGBTQ suicides, or those suicides or deaths where the cause is unidentified.

Our study focuses on data collected from the deaths of women where the perpetrator was male, which is by far the largest category. However, there are male deaths at the hands of women, and abuse and stalking in LGBTQ relationships can reach the same proportions suffered by heterosexual women

Stalking is gaining increasing visibility as a pattern of behaviour which affects a significant number of people. As many as 14 per 1,000 adults in the USA in any one-year report being victims of stalking, including 1 in 6 women and 1 in 19 men (Baum et al 2009). In the UK stalking is under-reported but according to the crime survey for England and Wales 4.6% of women and 2.7% of men aged 16 – 59 were victims of stalking in 2015/16 alone. The prevalence of cyber stalking is near impossible to estimate, and the relative ease with which people can obtain and use electronic surveillance devices, GPS tracking, and spyware makes stalking easier to achieve. A small scale study still in progress shows early indications that students indulge in surveillance activities through social media even where they acknowledge that their actions are inappropriate and could be considered stalking (Gwynne 2017). The sheer magnitude of the problem may hide and mask those who are a threat to their victims, which makes early identification crucially important.

Basic categories delineated through the type of relationship between the stalker and victim will produce different motivations and emotional states. For example, stalkers who focus on former or current partners may have different motivations and drivers to those who target colleagues, or public figures. We have not collected data on those stalkers who target public figures, and the largest category by far in our sample was comprised of victim and stalker who had, or were having, an intimate relationship (71%). Sheridan (2006) identifies four key stalker typologies: ex partners; infatuated; delusional fixation; and sadistic, each will have different motivations, and will present different risks and challenges for the victim. The landmark study into stalking (Mullen et al 1999) described five key types: rejected; intimacy seeking; incompetent; resentful; and predatory. We do feel despite this obvious complexity, that certain broad characteristics were consistent across our sample, and taking into consideration ostensible diversity,

we have defined stalking for the purposes of this research as having two key consistent aspects, and these are: presence of obsession and fixation, and surveillance or tracking activities.

The prevalence of stalking is much higher than the incidence of homicide, so it must be considered that even though stalking can create serious health issues for its victims, and can be menacing, only a very small proportion end in homicide. However, stalking is a pattern of behaviour associated with serious harm and can create high levels of fear of violence which can be debilitating (Rosenfeld 2004). The often hidden, unpredictable, and persistent nature of the activities, along with the implied menace can lead to states of hyper vigilance in victims which can have serious detrimental health effects (Mullen 2008). Female victims are reported to experience higher levels of fear than male victims. However, the fear differential may be related to the fear of sexual violence in women, and that men have the ability to create more fear through associations with violence, physical strength or statistical association with homicide (Sinclair and Frieze 2000). Stalking can be perpetrated by both men and women, but women are more likely to be victims, and Ostermeyer et al (2016) state that 80% of stalkers will be male. This figure is bolstered by the predominance of intimate partner stalking where males are more likely to stalk. But stalkers are female in between 15% and 20% of cases, and their characteristics mirror male stalkers in many respects (Meloy and Boyd 2003).

Women are more likely to suffer serious harm or homicide when they are stalked, especially where there is a previous (or current) intimate relationship with the stalker (McFarlane et al 2002). The intimate relationship stalking in our sample demonstrated a co-existence of stalking and coercive control in many cases. Rosenfeld and Harmon (2002) note however, that those stalkers with a resentful motivation who target acquaintances or strangers are as likely to assault as intimate stalkers, and Mullen et al (2000) found that assaults by stranger or acquaintance stalkers were similarly frequent especially where there was a sexual motivation. It is argued by McLean et al (2007) that the true prevalence of stalking related homicides is difficult to gauge from official records due in part to charging practices, especially where stalking charges may be dropped in favour of more serious assault charges for example, and the nature of previous offending may then be missed. This practice is discouraged in charging coercive control (Serious Crimes Act 2015), and it is apparently advised in the UK that coercive control is charged in addition to any assault or criminal damage charges for example, which may be present (Foster 2017). This may be an important model to follow, as both coercive control and stalking are course of conduct offences, and as such historical activities are crucial in not just proving the offence, but also in assessing risk.

Stalking and Coercive Control

Norris et al (2011) found that stalking and domestic abuse are highly correlated, and there is suggestion in the literature that coercive control and stalking are often simultaneously present. As the notion of coercive control (Stark 2009) gains political, criminal justice, and scientific recognition as a pattern of behaviour which characterises domestic abuse, its relationship to stalking in this context becomes more thought-provoking.

Stark (2009) says that coercive control is a course of conduct used to dominate a partner through violence, intimidation, isolation, and subordination. Stalking actions which track the victim and their activities, are often used in coercive control to maintain that control, and both behaviours share key characteristics. There is even a belief in some contexts that stalking and coercive control can be proxies for each other. For example, legislation in England and Wales fails to define stalking (Protection of Freedoms Act 2012) as occurring in an intact relationship, but instead uses the offence of coercive control (Serious Crimes Act 2015) where the relationship is intact, to criminalise the concerning or dangerous behaviours (Foster 2017). But stalking behaviours differ from coercive control in key aspects, and stalking has been found to be significantly and independently present in homicides where the relationship between killer and victim was intact (Campbell et al 2003). It is clear that those people who abuse through coercive control are very likely to use surveillance and tracking tactics as part of their behavioural repertoire (Stark 2009). However, it has been found that 'stranger' stalking is more likely to be identified as stalking, than where there has been a prior intimate relationship, and is more likely to be taken seriously (Scott et al 2010).

The co-existence of coercive control and stalking in many cases creates a dynamic that is pertinent in this study, mainly because Stark (2009) notes that coercive control is nine times more effective in predicting homicide than threats and violence. The fixated and obsessive nature of coercive control mirrors the fixated and obsessive nature of stalking, and because they are often simultaneously present in domestic homicides this is of potential interest and impact.

It is also important to acknowledge that stalking has a wider pool of potential victims than just those who have shared intimate relationships, because stalkers are known to target victims with whom they have had only the most minimal contact. For example, health professionals, colleagues, educators, and counsellors have been identified as vulnerable to stalkers (Kivisto 2015). In fact, one in seven psychologists reported in one study that they had been stalked by patients/clients (Kivisto 2015). However, it is suggested that stalking mainly occurs where the notion of a relationship is relevant (Spitzberg and Cupach 2007), whether that relationship be real, pursued, imagined, or part of a delusion. From this perspective, collegial and professional relationships are an environment for stalking to occur. If stalking is significantly present in both intact relationship homicides, and those where separations have occurred, as well as in other relationship types, the suggestion is that the behaviour itself is a much more important indicator than the relationship state. The stalking and coercive control legislation could potentially therefore have created a false dichotomy.

High Risk Markers

Research published as far back as 1988 states that the most dangerous perpetrators can be identified by their stalking behavior (Hart, 1988). When considering homicide risk markers, studies suggest that stalking, control and jealousy are factors which raise the risk for fatal violence (DVRVC 2016); other studies have suggested that explicit threats of harm are significant (Logan 2017) and some behaviours (like threats to children, and leaving notes on a vehicle) are also high risk for harm (Campbell et al 2003).

Threats by non-psychotic stalkers are significantly more likely to be acted on (Mullen et al 2008) and acting on threats should be considered an escalation (increase in severity or frequency of stalking actions). Escalation is a risk factor in itself (Mullen et al 2008). James and Farnham (2003) found that serious violence was associated with prior visits to the victim's home and former sexual intimacy, and they state that stalking behaviours and motivations are diverse and complex. They found that there are clear ostensible differences between those stalkers who use fatal or serious violence and those who use lower levels of violence, and that early identification of those who pose a serious risk is crucial.

Many acknowledged high risk markers for homicide can be found in Risk Identification Checklists (like DASH 2009). However, not all lists will weight those markers, and there can sometimes be a lean towards counting the number of markers that can be identified, rather than considering the importance of any existing pattern of behaviour, and the intention or motivation behind it (Monckton Smith et al 2014, McLean et al 2011). However, more recently, the importance of the pattern and the intentions of the stalker are becoming more pronounced in risk identification checklists.

Importantly, in this context, Stark (2017) argues that low level abuses characterise coercive control, and that the frequency and pattern of those abuses are important in identifying risk. For example, Stark states that in most cases the violence will be pushing, shoving, hair-pulling and so on. These are assaults that might be considered low level and non-serious. They do, however, characterise some of the most serious coercive control when they are persistent and continuous (Stark 2009).

Research similarly suggests that stalking should not be identified solely through the perceived seriousness of the stalking activities, or their duration.

Mullen et al (2006) state that the number and nature of stalking methods are important, and versatility suggests a higher likelihood of persistence and potential harm. Low level criminal damage to a victim's car, with moving furniture around to let a victim know the stalker has been in their property, and spying and following, for example, should be considered dangerous and threatening (Campbell et al 2003). It should also be considered that methods which force attention through official structures (like vexatious litigation, actions in the family courts, and baseless criminal allegations) are effective stalking actions (Waxman and Fletcher 2016, Restoring the Balance 2015) and should be recognised as such by police and prosecution agencies.

Stalkers will often seek to make the victim appear untrustworthy, especially as a witness. Women in the UK are three times more likely to be arrested when there is an allegation against them at a police call for domestic abuse, than men; women are arrested in three out of ten such incidents, and men in one out of ten (Hester 2009). This is often through manipulation of circumstances and a failure to identify manipulation. Vexatious family and civil court actions (which force contact against the victim's will) are almost never recorded or recognised as a stalking activity. Low level stalking actions (from a criminal justice perspective) can characterise high risk stalking. It is therefore helpful to consider the motivation behind the actions and the wider context (McEwan et al 2011), and to identify all stalking behaviours and actions. Interestingly, Campbell et al (2003) found the most frequent behaviours identified preceding an intimate partner homicide were following and spying, and they further report that women who reported being followed or spied on, or women who reported that the perpetrator was trying to communicate with them against their will, had nearly a twofold increase in the risk of becoming a homicide victim.

Predicting Homicide

Predicting a homicide is never going to be an exact science, and we recognise that stalkers and stalking have demonstrable diversity and complexity.

There are however, also consistencies, and as noted, fixation and obsession, along with surveillance and activities which force contact, would seem, to a great extent, common to stalkers.

We do feel the research which has concluded that relationship-related homicides are rarely spontaneous is important in this context. It is suggested that these homicides are more often planned than spontaneous (Adams 2007). The level and extent of that planning varies, but the 'he just snapped' explanation which suggests an immediate proximal provocation is not supported in research (Monckton Smith 2012).

Schlesinger (2002) describes catathymic homicides as occurring when there *'is a change in thinking whereby the offender comes to believe that he can resolve his inner conflict by committing an act of extreme violence against someone to whom he feels emotionally bonded'.*

This model for understanding an emotional journey to homicide we find compelling, and the possibility that stalking related homicides have a journey towards fatal violence in their antecedents may reveal opportunities for intervention.

Method and Sample

The sample was drawn mainly from the Counting Dead Women website maintained by Karen Ingala Smith (2017). This website tracks the deaths of women that occur in the UK as a result of male violence in particular.

The website captures the majority of, but not all, deaths that occur. We first included all cases published on the site in our identified time frames of 2012, 2013 and 2014, and then excluded cases where the victim was not specifically targeted. By this we mean that we excluded cases of mistaken identity, those which occurred outside the UK where circumstances could not be verified, and those committed in the course of another crime like burglary or robbery. 40 cases were therefore discarded. All remaining cases could be identified as having a targeted victim. We included cases of Honour Based Violence and sexual homicides, and also trawled media reports and Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) reports for any deaths not captured on the website. We identified 358 cases in all.

We gathered all the available information to track the antecedents and to identify key stalking, control, and risk markers in each case. The predominant sources accessed were media and court reports, and published DHRs. We were able to identify a published review in over 54% of cases. This kind of data presented a great many challenges for our data collection, as we were reliant on the authors of media and homicide reports identifying and recognising stalking. We know that stalking is under reported, and under recognised, and is often not taken seriously by professionals (Cass and Mallicoat 2015). This is reflected in our sources, as stalking was not always named, and the behaviours only implied. We feel that this gave the potential for the true prevalence of stalking to be underestimated, but also may create problems with researcher bias. With this in mind we used the following definitions to identify behaviours associated with stalking:

Stalking, *for the purposes of this research is either:*
any behaviour or action which involves tracking, following, watching, spying, unwanted, forced, or covert contact, repeated calling, texting, harassing, entering the victim's home without their knowledge, covert or overt criminal damage to their property, disruption to property, unwanted contact from third parties instigated by the stalker, vexatious court actions, or attempts to control through menace.

OR

Any fixated and obsessive attention designed to make the victim fearful or distressed.

In cases of Honour Based Violence, where surveillance and control was carried out by more than one person in some cases, we considered that the surveillance and tracking, and the repeated and ongoing nature of it, coupled with the perceived importance of controlling female behaviour and choices, constituted stalking according to our definition, even if it included more than one perpetrator.

We collected data on 68 variables under a number of categories, including demographic, court and environmental, known high risk markers, stalking behaviours, coercive control, violence, and data sources available. This created a sizable database, but this interim report focuses only on variables relevant to the relationship between stalking and homicide, and only on reporting frequencies.

Results

We found that stalking behaviours were present in 94% of cases.

If stalking is characterised by fixation (88%), obsession (94%) and surveillance/following (63%), it would appear to be a predominant characteristic in our antecedent histories. However, we urge caution in the surveillance frequency. Surveillance activities were not always talked about, and we might consider surveillance to include checking a person's phone or their internet activity, as well as covert cyber stalking which may well remain undetected.

In 71% of cases there had been, or was an intimate relationship, and in 51% of cases the relationship was intact. The remaining cases were recorded as 6% strangers, 4% colleagues, with the rest recorded as 'other'. These included many familial relationship homicides, with a number being sons killing their mothers.

We looked at some of the acknowledged high risk markers often seen in Risk Identification Checklists. We found that in 55% of cases there were threats to kill recorded; in 23% of cases there were records of suicidal threats; in 24% of cases strangulation assault was recorded; in 64% of cases there was some sort of police contact; and the victim was considered as fearful in 70% of cases.

The finding that in 85% of cases the homicide occurred in the victim's home suggests that intimate partner stalking is dominant, and that allowing access to the home is something to be discouraged. We recognise that the consequences of refusing access can be dangerous for the victim where there has been an intimate relationship. Victims who are stalked by colleagues or patients for example, are not usually under the same pressure to allow access, and may feel more justified in seeking assistance from the police.

Analysis

Obsession and Fixation

Our initial findings suggest that obsession and fixation are significantly present in the antecedents of homicides of females. It is more consistent than any one action marker, like strangulation, or threats to kill, which are more concerning when occurring simultaneously with stalking or coercive control.

We feel that the findings suggest that obsession and fixation should be identified and responded to at the earliest possible stage, along with any surveillance activities.

We do not suggest that a clinical diagnosis of obsession or fixation is necessary to identify concerns; a common understanding of these words would be a good place to start identifying those stalkers who require attention. For example some useful definitions:

Obsession – a persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling; an idea or thought that continually preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind (Merriam Webster dictionary)

Fixation – the state of being unable to stop thinking about something or someone, or an unnaturally strong interest in something or someone (Cambridge dictionary)

The amount of time given by some stalkers to their activities, and any resistance to stopping, even though the effects are detrimental to themselves and others, we feel are indicative of these characteristics. We feel we identified these characteristics in stalking, and in coercive control.

Surveillance

We further suggest that surveillance activity can be symptomatic of fixation and obsession in this context, and they should be taken very seriously in any risk assessment. Not all people engaging in surveillance (especially through social media) are obsessive or fixated so earliest intervention should be encouraged, and may help identify those who present most risk or threat, and are actually stalking.

In the UK, Criminal Justice responses to stalking are increasingly reflective of the importance of early intervention. Stalking Protection Orders which are to be introduced have been designed to give victims of stranger stalking protection at the earliest opportunity. It has even been suggested (De Becker 1997) that intervention at the later stages or where escalation has started may present elevated risk for the victim.

Escalation and the journey to homicide

Certainly our impression from the data is that the homicides we analysed did not occur during a heated argument where there was no other indication of concern. There were invariably controlling and/or stalking behaviours in the history, and an escalation in behaviours in the immediate history (79% of cases).

We did not feel we could attempt to measure escalation time scales with any accuracy, as we did not have access to that kind of data. However, we feel that escalation timescales often span between a couple of hours, to a number of weeks.

The *onset* of a period of escalation within the stalking/control relationship varied, and in some cases occurred very quickly, in just a number of weeks, and in other cases the escalation began after years. Because of this we suggest that the length of a relationship or association, where there was one, is not an indicator for the level of potential risk or threat. In our sample, where we could extract the data (102 cases) 15% of relationships were under 12 months in duration. 50% of associations or relationships were under 10 years (cumulative frequency), with the remaining 50% stretching to over 50 years.

Escalation therefore, could potentially be a crucial part of the stalker's journey to homicide, and an important indicator that their emotional journey may be reaching a crisis point. However, escalation may be difficult to identify especially if the full range of stalking activities has not been identified. Similarly, homicide triggers may be difficult to identify without asking questions, which is why professional curiosity is important when speaking with stalking victims.

We feel it is also interesting to note a particular characteristic that needs further examination in future research. We observed in a number of cases – and this is supported in the extant research – that there were threats to kill made directly to the victim (55% of cases). We noted a small number of cases where, during a period of escalation, the killer made specific threats against the victim to others, who did not then take that threat seriously.

For example, in some cases they told friends they were going to kill the victim, and how they were going to achieve that, or they told a friend about their own stalking behaviours. In one case a stalker phoned his friend from inside the home of his victim (the victim was out at the time) describing his search for evidence of infidelity (they were not in a relationship). We found that friends did not always take these threats or activities seriously, so did not report them, or even try to stop them. It may be that public awareness of the dangers of stalking behaviours is a crucial step forward that needs to be taken. We also feel that this is probably far more likely where there is, or has been, an intimate relationship with the stalker, and may be more common than is recorded.

Organising and Illustrating Characteristics relevant to Homicide

We also organised key characteristics we found in the homicides into the three categories which form the Domestic Homicide Triad (Monckton Smith 2017). The Triad structures characteristics which are suggested in research to be present in the antecedents to a homicide, into categories. These categories reflect key components which seem to come together when a homicide is a real potential threat. The three categories are:

the offender's emotional or psychological state; the presence of acknowledged high risk markers; and triggers which create escalation.

The characteristics within the categories noted in the table were extracted from our cases and from research.

Some key characteristics organised into Domestic Homicide Triad categories

Psychology	Risk Markers	Triggers
Fixation	Stalking/surveillance	Separation
Obsession	Coercive control	Rejection
Jealousy	Escalation	Revenge
History of stalking/control	Threats to suicide	Resentment
Persistence	Threats to kill	Failing mental health of victim or stalker
Need to win	Weapons/violence	Failing physical of health victim or stalker
Compulsion	Strangulation/restrict breathing	Financial ruin
Issues with challenge and rejection	Versatility: Vexatious litigation, criminal allegations and child contact battles	Humiliation
Delusion	Entering the home covertly	Losing control of the victim
Routines/rituals	Acting on threats Sexual violence	

When any one characteristic is identified in each of the three categories and they are simultaneously present, the triad suggests heightened concern for the safety of the victim. These categories mirror in many ways our findings that obsession and fixation (emotional state/psychology), surveillance, tracking, following (high risk markers) and escalation indicating presence of a trigger (triggers) are important characteristics. This categorisation may also be more reflective of identifying a journey to homicide.

We further explored whether the Triad was completed in our cases. We looked only at cases which had a published DHR (54%) and considered that report only. We found that in over 90% of those cases, there was presence of at least one characteristic from each category of the Triad simultaneously present. In those cases where there was data available, most cases completed the Triad. We do not suggest that the Triad is a risk assessment tool, but it is a visual illustration of how threat or risk are more closely associated with the mindset of the stalker (and a journey to homicide) than just actions or behaviours.

The coincidence of characteristics:
The Homicide Triad (Monckton Smith 2017)

Conclusions

In conclusion, our analysis of the data suggests that homicides associated with stalking activities are associated with obsession and fixation, and, irrespective of relationship state or type, appear to be achieved through an emotional journey.

Not all stalking will reach the escalation/crisis point where homicide is planned, and it is difficult to predict which ones will be triggered to escalation.

It is important therefore to identify stalking, and take all stalking seriously, as any stalking where the key characteristics are present could potentially escalate. This makes early intervention crucial, as the escalation could occur at any point after the materialisation of a trigger. Also, most potential stalkers will desist when warned at an early stage when they are not fixated or obsessed.

We would make the following key observations:

- **That stalking is a key indicator for future potential serious harm:** Stalking should always be taken seriously, and interventions made at the earliest stage.
- **That stalking should be identified through intention, not just actions:** Stalking actions may be varied, but the intention behind the actions should define them as stalking or not.
- **That the seriousness of stalking should not be measured solely by the severity of the stalking actions:** Many stalking activities appear non-serious and 'low level'. This should not solely inform the level of risk; the presence of the activities is a risk marker. Many activities will be covert and hidden.
- **That victims are helped to restrict access to their home, workplace, cyberspace, or other private space:** Homicide victims are often killed in their own home, or their workplace. Restricting access in cases of stalking is important, but victims may need help achieving this.
- **That fixated and obsessed stalkers should be identified early:** (key indicators may include breaches of bail or court orders, failure to stop when instructed, failure to act in their own best interests, persistence, or a need to win).
- **That every allegation of stalking is taken seriously irrespective of relationship type or age of offender/victim.** Cases where the victim is in a relationship, or has had a relationship with the stalker present increased risk for serious harm. Young people and elderly people are at as much risk as other age groups. However, those stranger or acquaintance types pursuing sexual contact present increased risk, and non-psychotic types.
- **That there is a recognition that early intervention is crucial:** Early intervention may weed out those more likely to desist, and help to identify persistent stalkers earlier.
- **That consideration be given to the notion that homicide where stalking is present may be reached through a 'journey', and not through immediate proximal provocation by the victim:** The research suggests that these homicides are usually planned. The length of that planning varies. Planning may begin after a trigger, and may only last hours, but maybe even years. Where the planning is over a longer period, stalking activities will continue and escalation may indicate, in many cases, imminence of danger.
- **That diverse stalking activities which force contact, should be recognised as stalking:** (including vexatious litigation, baseless allegations of criminal activity against the victim, and actions in the family court). These exampled activities force contact and may be designed to make the victim appear untrustworthy or unstable. Escalation is better recognised when the full repertoire of the stalker is known.
- **That the public are made aware of the dangers of stalkers, and always take threats made seriously and report them:** Stalkers may tell others of their activities (not all will) especially after an intimate relationship with the victim. Many stalkers are not concerned that others find out about their activities, especially in a period of escalation where they may feel justified and entitled to act as they do.
- **Professionals should investigate further when third party allegations are made:** If someone reports their friend has been making death threats against someone, or talking about how they are going to kill them, this should be followed up.
- **Police and prosecution services should always charge stalking and coercive control along with any other offences identified:** This helps to create a crucial history of the behaviours for future prosecutions and risk assessment.

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